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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 05 ANKARA 000097

SIPDIS

FOR GENERAL ABIZAID FROM AMBASSADOR EDELMAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/05/2015

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR GENERAL ABIZAID'S JANUARY 11-12  
VISIT TO TURKEY

Classified By: Ambassador Eric S. Edelman. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: Our bilateral relationship with Turkey has become quite bumpy over the last years. The comfort of our NATO Alliance has been tested by Turkish perceptions of our operations in Iraq, developments on the domestic scene, and the movement toward the EU. Turkey shares our overall policy goals for Iraq, but is concerned about the possibility of a Shia-dominated government after elections as well as Kurdish aspirations for independence. Turkey has been constructive in insisting on elections on time everywhere in the country and tells us it is reaching out to Sunnis to encourage their participation in the political process. Iraq dominates our bilateral relations with Turkey; the Turks are bitter about our lack of action against PKK/Kongra-Gel, our arrest of Turkish SF personnel near Suleymania in July 2003, "aggressive" coalition military operations, and what they perceive as our excessive tilt toward Iraq's Kurds (including some disinformation via Iraqi Turkmen sources they are probably responsible for themselves). Turkish leaders seem ready to believe the most outrageous and false reporting in the Turkish press about civilian deaths and coalition tactics in anti-insurgent operations. Nonetheless, Turkey cooperates with our efforts in Iraq by allowing our tankers to refuel cargo flights on OIF and OEF missions, the use of Incirlik for rotation of troops out of Iraq, and by keeping open a key GLOC for coalition sustainment and goods for the Iraqi people. Insurgents have killed about 70 Turkish truck drivers and contractors in Iraq, as well as five Turkish police officers transiting Mosul on Dec. 17; the latter event especially shocked the country. In Afghanistan, the Turks do not participate meaningfully in OEF, but allow us to do some logistical support out of and move detainees through Turkey. They will take over the rotating ISAF command for the second time in February with about 1,600 troops. End summary.

Iraq: Still a Wedge Between Us  
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2. (C) Iraq impacts our entire bilateral relationship. Senior military commanders have worked hard to repair the damage caused by Turkey's failure to approve passage of the 4th ID in March 2003 and our arrest of Turkish Special Forces personnel in Suleymania on July 4 of that year, and relationships at the top have improved. Nonetheless, the relationship remains fragile. The GOT shares our policy goal of a unified, prosperous, democratic Iraq at peace internally and with its neighbors, but our action in Iraq has always been unpopular in Turkey. The images of violence, exaggerated stories of civilian casualties--including some information circulated by the Turkish-influenced Iraqi Turkmen Front--turn the Iraq issue into one that undermines the basic perception of common values, including among the Turkish military at many levels.

3. (C) Concerns about the ethnic balance in and future of Kirkuk, Kurdish desires for independence, our lack of action against the terrorist PKK/Kongra Gel (hereon Kongra-Gel) camps in northern Iraq and perceived discrimination against Iraq's Turkmen population underpin Turkish attitudes on Iraq. While the government took measures to reiterate the value of U.S.-Turkish relations, sensationalist, irresponsible press reports and statements by public figures feed perceptions that we caused massive civilian casualties, including in Fallujah; that we tolerate Kurdish designs to seize Kirkuk and break away; and that the U.S. acquiesces to (or supports) the PKK's presence in Iraq. All of this continues despite continuing mission efforts to keep the GOT informed and to hold the GOT and the media to a strict standard of fact in their statements.

4. (C) You will be coming to Turkey less than three weeks before the Iraqi elections, elections that both we and the Turks believe are crucial to the future of Iraq and the region. Whether the elections proceed smoothly or not, the Turks have grave concerns about Iraq's future. They worry about long-term U.S. staying power in Iraq, that events in Iraq will spiral out of control, and that Ankara could be faced with either a Shia-dominated government that they assert will tilt dangerously toward Iran, an intensified movement toward an independent Kurdish state emanating from northern Iraq, or both. Turkish leaders will seek your assurance that the USG, and our military, remain committed to

ensuring a stable--and unified--Iraq. Turkey has thrown its full support behind holding Iraqi elections on time. FonMin Gul told Deputy Secretary Armitage Jan. 3 that any delay in elections would worsen the security situation, throw Turkey's Iraq policy into disarray, and force Turkey to re-assess its approach.

#### PKK/Kongra-Gel: Another Sticking Point

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15. (C) Coincidentally, you will also arrive here on the same day the U.S., Turkey, and Iraq will hold our first trilateral discussion on border security, specifically PKK/Kongra-Gel. Senior Turkish military leaders tell us that they understand that we are not now able to take action against this terrorist organization. They remind us, however, of the need to show resolve and to stand with Turkey in working on ways to render the PKK/Kongra-Gel ineffective. (NOTE: We also know that the military uses our lack of action against PKK/Kongra-Gel to needle the current government, which it dislikes, and claim it cannot deliver, either. END NOTE.) We hope these talks will produce some results to indicate that the U.S., Turkey, and Iraq are working together to fulfill President Bush's pledge that Iraq will no longer be a base for terrorist operations against Turkey. This is all the more important since PKK/Kongra-Gel uses northern Iraq as its command and control base and its terrorists infiltrate into Turkey from Iraq and murder Turkish security personnel and civilians. The GOT knows that there is no substantive connection between your visit and these talks, and we will also work with the press to avoid this confusion.

#### Turkey Hurt By Insurgency

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16. (C) Though Turkey has lost about 70 truck drivers and contractors to insurgent attacks in Iraq, Turk were especially shocked when on Dec. 17 AIF murdered five Turkish police officers (and an Iraqi driver) who were driving through Mosul on their way to Baghdad to provide security for the Turkish embassy there. Task Force Olympia personnel killed two of the terrorists, treated the Turkish WIA, and helped repatriate both the five bodies and the WIA Turk back home. This incident was a cause for national mourning and angst, and the entire state apparatus from the President and Prime Minister to the CHOD and National Police Chief turned out for the funeral. After the DCM admonished DCHOD General Basbug concerning initial outrageous press reports and a Turkish General's irresponsible and uninformed comments, implying the U.S. was responsible for the deaths, Turkish leaders and senior officials have gone out of their way to express their appreciation privately for TFO's efforts (including a warm letter from CHOD GEN Ozkok to GEN Myers). However, publicly they remain silent. We have tried to use this tragic incident to point out to the Turks that coalition operations against AIF are seeking to prevent the very attacks that have resulted in the deaths of their police officers and truck drivers. Even privately, Turkish leaders seem unable or unwilling to acknowledge this point, though it is true that since this incident both officials and the press seem to have toned down the anti-American rhetoric...a bit.

#### Not All Bad News...

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17. (C) Despite our policy differences, Turkey has provided valuable assistance and cooperation, for which you should express appreciation. Ankara offered to send peacekeeping troops to Iraq in October 2003, approved the use of Incirlik Air Base for tankers to refuel aircraft on support missions for both Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), authorized the transit of U.S. troops from Iraq on rotation out, and permits the transit of supplies for our forces and humanitarian goods (since its inception until the end of CY 04, over \$2.5 billion worth of coalition sustainment and humanitarian assistance). The GOT has reached out to all major Iraqi groups to encourage participation in elections on January 30. Turkey is also active in reconstruction efforts, including providing electricity for Iraq, and training in Turkey of Iraqi diplomats and, as its contribution to the NATO training mission, Iraqi security forces.

#### ...But Turks Dragging Their Feet on Further Cooperation

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18. (C) That said, recent requests to increase our use of Incirlik AB (e.g., establish a logistics air hub, support EUCOM's request to increase training deployments) have been delayed as Turkish officials consider them part and parcel with the idea that we might seek to move F-16s permanently to the base as part of the Defense Posture Review Initiative. Turkish military leaders have told us that they support the use of Incirlik as a cargo hub, but that the decision now rests with the civilian leadership. You may want to remind your civilian interlocutors (especially FonMin Gul) that the

cargo hub--which we requested of the GOT over six months ago--would be of vital operational assistance to the success of OIF and OEF.

Support for the GWOT

19. (C) The public and official preoccupation with Iraq overshadows the positive cooperation we have in other aspects of the GWOT: Since 9/11 and the November 2003 Istanbul attacks, our traditional intelligence and law enforcement cooperation has improved. Our militaries coordinate assistance to Georgia and Azerbaijan, improving their abilities to protect important energy transportation routes. Turkey subscribes to every arms control arrangement it is eligible to join, including the Proliferation Security Initiative. Ankara has been supportive of international efforts to press Iran to meet its commitments to the IAEA, although they are more inclined to persuasion than coercion. The Turkish military's Partnership for Peace Training Center provides counterterrorism and other training to personnel from PFP partner countries. The military has recently established a NATO Center of Excellence for the Defense Against Terrorism that will provide more specialized training opportunities for both NATO partner nations and Allies. And Turkey will again assume the command of ISAF in February for a six-month period, during which they will significantly increase their contribution (up to about 1,600 troops) to this important NATO mission.

Afghanistan

10. (C) While Turkey has only token participation in OEF, it maintains a constant presence of about 220 soldiers in ISAF. Starting next month it will begin another six-month stint as rotating commander of ISAF. During the spring and summer of 2004, we succeeded in getting Turkey to commit to provide a PRT, but NATO planners, the U.S., and other Allies sent mixed signals to the Turks on where their PRT might serve, and the Turks withdrew their offer. Now that NATO is seeking PRTs for Phase II, we are gently probing the Turks to again consider the issue.

Your Meetings

11. (U) The GOT has confirmed meetings for you with Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, Deputy CHOD General Ilker Basbug, and Chairman of the Turkish National Security Council Ambassador Yigit Alpogan. Regrettably both Prime Minister Erdogan and CHOD General Ozkok will be out of the country during your visit.

Gul

12. (C) Gul was serving as Prime Minister during the leadup to the March 1, 2003 parliamentary vote denying the use of Turkey for OIF, and he was seen within the ruling AK Party as working directly to ensure the motion did not pass. He remains a difficult interlocutor for us on Iraq. Despite his seemingly good English and apparently amiable demeanor, Gul has Islamist origins and is at best uncomfortable with the U.S. presence in the region. During his Jan. 3 meeting with Deputy Secretary Armitage, Gul accused the U.S. of favoring the interests of the Iraqi Kurds over those of Turkey and Iraq's Turkmen population. That said, he has maintained the Foreign Ministry's generally constructive approach to Iraq, including outreach to Iraq's Sunni politicians to encourage their participation in January elections as well as claiming that Turkey is using its influence to get the Iranians and Syrians to cease their support for terrorism in Iraq.

Alpogan

13. (C) Amb. Alpogan took over in Oct. 2004 as the first civilian Secretary-General in the seventy-year history of Turkey's National Security Council, an executive foreign policy body composed of the President, the Prime Minister and other key ministers, and senior military officers. Previous Secretaries-General had been four-star Army generals.

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Alpogan is reforming the organization's heavy reliance on the armed forces, creating a mixed organization of professional diplomats as well as military officers. As with your other interlocutors, he will likely be focused on Iraq, but will also be interested in a broader discussion on other countries in your AOR.

14. (C) Points to Emphasize With Gul and Alpogan:

--Appreciate you working together with us as elections approach in Iraq.

--Appreciate also your outreach to Sunni parties to encourage their participation, which is vital not just to the election but to the future of a unified Iraq.

--We are working hard to ensure that Iraqi Kurds remain part of a unified Iraq. An independent Kurdistan is not in either of our interests.

--For example, we have pressed them hard on participating in governorate council elections in Kirkuk.

--Understand that the insurgency has taken its toll on your citizens, including your truck drivers and more recently the five Turkish police officers murdered in Mosul.

--Insurgents want to discourage Turkey from carrying out a constructive role in Iraq; we cannot let them win.

--As we did during the Talafar and Fallujah operations, we will do our best to share real-time information both here in Ankara and with your LNOs in Iraq.

--The wildly exaggerated and just plain wrong reporting in the Turkish press about our operations (especially in Fallujah)--regrettably repeated by some Turkish leaders--can strain our partnership. Urge you to correct the record where possible.

--The terrorists we go after in such operations are the same people who kill your citizens in Iraq.

--Understand that the government is still considering our request to use Incirlik Air Base as a cargo hub for OIF and OEF. When can we expect a response?

--Appreciate Turkey again assuming command of ISAF next month. Your command period will cover Afghanistan's parliamentary elections, a key milestone.

--NATO is still lacking enough PRTs to cover Phase II needs. Would Turkey again consider offering a PRT, perhaps after your ISAF command ends in August 2005?

Basbug  
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15. (C) Basbug is an experienced commander, comfortable with and accessible to foreign guests. Though he and his military colleagues are distrustful of the current moderate Islamist government, TGS stood aside and kept silent in the runup to the EU's Dec. 17 decision to begin accession negotiations with Turkey this year. The Turkish armed forces share the GOT's concerns about Iraq, and are deeply suspicious of the aspirations of both Iraq's and Turkey's Kurds. While Turkey's military leaders used to raise our inaction again Kongra-Gel in nearly every meeting with U.S. officials from mid-2003 to mid-2004, of late they have not mentioned this issue very much; they have stopped asking when we will take action. This lack of communication does not mean their anger is allayed. Basbug especially will likely note the coincidence of your visit here with the trilateral Kongra-Gel talks.

16. (C) Points to Emphasize With Basbug:

--Understand that the insurgency has taken its toll on your citizens, including your truck drivers and more recently the five Turkish police officers murdered in Mosul.

--Insurgents want to discourage Turkey from carrying out a constructive role in Iraq; we cannot and will not let them win.

--As we did during the Talafar and Fallujah operations, we will do our best to share real-time information both here in Ankara and with your LNOs in Iraq.

--Appreciate Turkey again assuming command of ISAF next month. Your command period will cover Afghanistan's parliamentary elections, a key milestone.

--NATO is still lacking enough PRTs to cover Phase II needs. Would Turkey again consider offering a PRT, perhaps after your ISAF command ends in August 2005?

--(IF RAISED) Understand your frustration that Kongra-Gel remains in place in northern Iraq. We need to work together with the Iraqis to take steps to weaken the organization so that it cannot threaten you or Iraq.

17. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

18. (U) Kabul minimize considered.  
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